Caitlin Niman

ENGL 015

Assignment 4

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Audience: Congressman Mark Critz

Dear Congressman Mark Critz,

I am aware that you are currently representing Pennsylvania, specifically its workforce. To cut to the chase, I would like to offer you a plan of action to award new jobs to the people of Pennsylvania, with little to no cost. All that needs to be done is to approve the legalization of marijuana. I know that not many would come to you with this proposition; however, I have a plan that could do wonders for not only Pennsylvania, but for the entire United States of. All you need to do is hear me out.

Cannabis, like our country, has a history. It was used in large amounts in America in the 60s and 70s, as I’m sure you know, along with many other psychedelic drugs. This era in American history is so well-known for its drug use that it has been nicknamed “the feel good” era. It was used by just about anyone that could get their hands on it. In fact, several business owners and electives from both sides of the political spectrum have admitted to smoking marijuana at least once in their lifetime (Dudley 9). But why exactly did its use become frowned upon so dramatically from then to now?

Well, many argue that marijuana is addictive. Society started to shove aside the drugs in the 80s after beginning to realize the harmful effects of cigarettes. They found compelling information about the risks of smoking, and expanded those risks to all drugs. However, not all drugs are the same. Cigarettes have tar and nicotine, coffee and chocolate have caffeine, and cannabis has THC. THC, or tetrahydrocannabinol, is the chemical that basically gives the desired “high” feeling (CITE 3). Because cannabis is illegal, most would tend to believe that it must be the most dangerous or the most addictive drug. However, this is not the case. In fact, cigarettes are more addictive than marijuana (Dudley 34). The nicotine in cigarettes causes a chemical reaction in the brain. This reaction makes the brain dependent on the nicotine, in effect, creating the addiction. In the same sense, studies have been conducted which show prescription drugs are also more addictive than marijuana. The only negative effects found from smoking marijuana have been vomiting and nausea, not addiction (Dudley 15).

Also, some will say that it’s dangerous. It’s been recorded that the THC levels of marijuana today are far higher (20x higher) than those from the 60s (Dudley 18). It’s the fact that these THC levels are rising at an uncontrollable rate that makes society skittish. THC is not dangerous, but society is trained to link a lack of control to danger. In addition, people tend to see marijuana as a gateway drug. They believe that if someone smokes marijuana they will be more likely to try heroin, cocaine, or other more dangerous drugs. So then, in the same respect, wouldn’t cigarettes be a gateway drug to marijuana? Would eating Reese’s Pieces lead to popping ecstasy? Sounds a bit absurd doesn’t it? That’s because the notion of marijuana, a non-addictive, harmless drug leading to heroin addiction *is* absurd.

If you look at a chart of the recent death tolls for 2010, you will see that marijuana doesn’t make the top 10. However, cigarettes come in at number two (CITE 4). The nicotine in cigarettes, along with the tar, have worse effects on a human than does the THC in marijuana. The list says that cancer was the second leading cause of death, killing 562, 875 in the year 2009 (CITE 4). Last I checked, cigarettes and other tobacco products cause several types of cancer including lung and mouth. Cigarettes and other tobacco products are the leading cause of cancer, basically putting cigarettes at number two on the list of leading death risks (CITE 5). However, marijuana does not cause cancer. On the contrary, marijuana has been used as medicine for several years now to cope with the effects of cancer. For example, it is used to help cancer patients on chemo (Dudley 15). It has been used to help those with AIDS regain their appetite (Dudley 15). It has also been used to help those that suffer from multiple sclerosis, paraplegia, quadriplegia, glaucoma, epilepsy, asthma, menstrual cramps, and depression (Dudley 15). The marijuana prescribed by doctors for their patients is monitored by the FDA, which means they know how much THC is in it. So, if the FDA already regulates the amount of THC in the marijuana used by medical patients, then it can regulate the marijuana sold in stores. The real problem with legalizing it as a recreational drug is difficult to find.

Billions of dollars of taxpayers’ money is wasted every year on marijuana prohibition. Why wouldn’t we put that money to good use instead of using it to jail those who smoke cannabis? It only makes sense to allow people in this time to use marijuana in a recreational manner. People are happy when they smoke it. Don’t people deserve to be happy at an economic low such as this? Legalizing marijuana would create jobs. Taxing it, would raise money so that we could fluff away some of America’s debt. President Obama was on the news recently, addressing the public about the problem we are facing economically. He reported to have only until August 2nd to make a decision about the new plan of action (CNN). Why wouldn’t he pass the bill that has been placed in Congress earlier last month that promises to cut spending, and increase profits? I’m talking about HR 2306, the bill to legalize marijuana (CITE 7). It’s the first bill of its kind to reach congress, and I know it will not leave until it is passed. Those who are persistent about this subject, will continue to beat down the doors of Congress until they give in. This is where you come in.

As I mentioned before, the bill to legalize the substance has already reached Congress. Making it legal doesn’t mean that there will not be laws binding it. Instead, it could be monitored like alcohol. There should be an age limit (either 18 or 21) for an adult to legally purchase the substance. There should also be warning labels to make the public aware of any adverse affects linked to smoking marijuana (just as there are warnings for alcohol and cigarettes). Also, as a recreational substance, it should be taxed similarly. In the end, making marijuana legal will reduce crime rates linked to drugs as well as bringing in a profit instead of wasting money on keeping a harmless substance illegal.

Making marijuana legal, along with adding laws to monitor its use and production, will only help people rather than hurt them. It also, when taxed and distributed, will help the national debt decrease, while providing jobs for thousands across the country, helping the economy start to grow again.

So make sure you are pressuring your fellow Congressmen and government leaders. Make them aware of the facts about marijuana rather than letting them live with the myths.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Caitlin Niman

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